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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR, THINK TANKS TO REPRESENT AUSTRALIA AT PRT CONFERENCE

REF: SECSTATE 03595

¶1. (SBU) Australia will be represented at the upcoming PRT conference in Prague by Ambassador to the Czech Republic Ruth Pearce. Australia does not have a deputy SRAP, and no high level officials from Canberra are planning to attend the conference. Afghanistan Section Director Paul Noonan told us that Australia had initially hoped to send some military officials from Afghanistan, but because of conflicts with staffing patterns, they will be unable to do so.

¶2. (SBU) Rebecca Shrimpton of the Asia Pacific Civilian Military Center of Excellence will accompany Pearce to the conference. This relatively new think tank was founded after the last election in 2007 to take a strategic look at the Australian military's foreign deployments. The center has conducted several studies and conferences on PRTs and will provide technical expertise on the issues and regions in question.

¶3. (SBU) COMMENT: While the ambassador to the Czech Republic is relatively senior, no government officials who focus on Afghanistan will be attending the Prague conference.

This is in part because Australia is not formally a contributor to the Dutch PRT in Oruzgan province. While they collaborate closely, Australia still sees its work as separate from that of the PRT. END COMMENT.

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